



## INTIMATIONS.

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## THE CHINESE PETITION AGAINST THE PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.

The objection to section 17 is one of the most forcible contained in the petition. The petitioners say that what the Chinese most hate is that strangers should come and disturb their private residences, and see their womenfolk; that Chinese women are inexperienced, illiterate, and of weak nerves; that the women would be alarmed if an inspecting officer came when there was no man at home; and, further, that robbers, thieves, and vagabonds would penetrate inspecting officers, pretend to inspect the houses, and take the opportunity to commit rape, robbery, or theft; and that even among the officers themselves, it is impossible to say that every one of them will not presume on his power, and take advantage of it to accomplish improper designs. The phrase quoted in the earlier part of the petition from Captain Elliott's proclamation as to the Chinese not being interfered with within the threshold of their houses was simply a rough translation of the saying that an Englishman's house is his castle, and that a Chinaman's would be the same. The doctrine is one which should be steadfastly maintained in its main lines. It is certain that in England wholesome powers of inspection of private houses would not be allowed the authorities, nor should they be here. Cases may occur where an inspection is desirable, but it should only be allowed where there is well founded suspicion of insanitary conditions, and attended by the same limitations and formalities as search warrants in criminal cases. It would be intolerable to any community, and more so to an oriental than a European community, to have inspectors penetrating into the private apartments of a house at all times and seasons.

On the subject of overcrowding the petitioners are naturally excited. They do not see how overcrowding can be prevented until additional house accommodation is provided. We are glad to hear that the Government intend to take one useful step towards opening up new building sites. Hitherto the strenuous pursued in the disposal of crown lands has been to wait until there is an application for a particular lot, when it is put up to auction, but it is considered bad form for any one to bid against the applicant. Instead of waiting for applications a surveyor is to be appointed whose special duty it will be to parcel out lots suitable for building, which will be put up to auction as they are surveyed, and will become subject in fact as well as nominally to free competition. Under the new system it is expected a considerable amount of land will shortly come into the market. Even in the immediate neighbourhood of the town there are no doubt sites which have hitherto escaped the notice of land speculators, but will attract the attention of a professional man whose particular duty it will be to look for them. It is measurable like this, and more especially to schemes like the reclamation of the foreshore and of Quincey Bay, that we must look for relief from overcrowding, rather than to legislative enactments limiting the amount of land which can be built on. It is stated in the petition that although the rents of the houses at East and West Points are slightly lower than those in the centre of the town, these houses are too far from the place where the people do their business, and it is very hard and inconvenient for them to have to walk to and fro in the mornings and evenings. The Land Commission recommended that these districts should be rendered more accessible by the construction of tramways. Certain it is that East and West Points will in future have to be more extensively occupied than they have been. The relief which will be afforded to the central district by the proposed reclamation of the foreshore will be overtaken in a few years by the increase of the population, and unless the Eastern and Western districts be made use of the pressure will be as great as ever. The population is something over two hundred thousand. It is safe to predict that within twenty years, if not much sooner, it will be five hundred thousand. No argument is needed to demonstrate that five hundred thousand people cannot be accommodated in a space that is already overcrowded with two hundred thousand. And, moreover, the centre of the town will be occupied more and more every year by purely business premises, and accommodation for residential purposes will perforce have to be sought elsewhere. It is of no use talking about the hardship of this, for it is inevitable. And with the construction of tramways the hardship on the working classes of having to go to and from their work would not really be great, nor greater relatively speaking than it is in London. To attempt, however, to turn people out of their houses by legislative enactment before there are facilities for lodging them in the suburbs is altogether impracticable. While, therefore, we do not expect to see the centre of the town continue to be occupied for residence to the extent it has been in the past, as the Chinese apparently do, we entirely concur with them in their protest against the overcrowding clauses.

There are objections urged in the petition to several other sections, namely, those referring to the construction of down pipes, the conditions under which certain workmen are to be employed, the construction of the house drains with the main drains, etc. The objections have a good deal of force, but they refer mostly to matters of detail, and could be dealt with in the Bill which will doubtless be brought forward when the disallowance by Her Majesty of the present measure has been formally notified.

We note that the *Courier d'Haiphong* has been enlarged.

From Manila papers we learn that the Alhij volcano has recently been in a state of violent eruption.

We have reason to believe (says the *Rangoon Gazette*) that the work of delimiting the frontier between Burma and China will not be commenced this year, and that no Commission for that purpose will be appointed for some time.

The Superintendent informs us that the P. & O. steamer *Ballaarat*, with the mail, will call at Singapore at 5 p.m. on Thursday for this port.

A telegram published in the *Tonquin papers* states that Rear-Admiral De la Jaille has been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Naval Division of Cochin-China.

The Agents (Messrs. Adamson, Bell & Co.) inform us that the *Shire Line* steamer *Carmichael*, from London, will call at Singapore yesterday afternoon for this port.

The Chinese ironclad *Ting Yuen* and *Ching Yuen* will call at Singapore for the Hongkong & Whampoa Dock Co.'s new Admiralty dock at Kowloon, and the first will go on Monday next.

The *Merle Comore* says: "It has been rumoured during the past few days that the cruiser *Albatros* is to be sold at Hongkong and with the proceeds of the sale and some additional money a vessel will be built which will fulfil the requirements."

The German frigate *Bismarck*, the corvette *Corona*, and the gunboat *Albatros*, having been ordered to the Pacific, arrived here yesterday morning from Matupi, which place they left on the 21st ult. The *Bismarck* State party is expected to be here in the ship of Admiral Sir Richard Hamilton.

A telegram was received in the colony yesterday stating that another fine had been ordered by the court against the *Shire Line* steamer *Carmichael*, used as a residence only, had been burnt. The fire has been disastrous to the Chinese property, and it is feared that beyond the damage just mentioned, foreign property has suffered loss.

Mr. A. E. Colquhoun, replying to an article in the *Economist*, sustains his contention that the main object of the annexation of Burma was to tap the trade of China through the Bay of Bengal, and that we can neither develop Burma nor secure Chinese trade and Chinese emigration by internal railways alone.

Professor J. B. Steers, of Unilever University, has arrived at Hilo, and intends to stay the fauna and flora of the Philippines, especially the coral reefs. He is accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Steers, and by his daughter, Miss Steers. Professor Steers visited the Philippines once before and presented to the Natural History Museum of the University forty new specimens of birds and mammals.

A Calcutta telegram in the *Rangoon Gazette* dated the 12th ult. says: "Lieutenant Young, of the King's Dragon Guards, who accompanied Messrs. James and Felford on their trip to Manchuria, has just arrived in India having secured a far more successful journey. He has travelled from China to Cutch, overland across Mongolia, a journey which since the days of Marco Polo no European has accomplished."

There has been some trouble in Kinta, Perak, with Chinese Kongsies. The *Pang Gasette* says: "The trouble is not yet over, though the Kongsies are not yet out of the country. A large number of Kongsies, who are in a state of ferment, which is difficult to suppress, only a few days ago several police officers were sent to the district to deal with the trouble. The Kongsies are in a state of ferment, which is difficult to suppress, only a few days ago several police officers were sent to the district to deal with the trouble. The Kongsies are in a state of ferment, which is difficult to suppress, only a few days ago several police officers were sent to the district to deal with the trouble."

At the Police Court yesterday a large number of cases of larceny with a large and crying in prohibited districts were disposed of. The only case of any importance was that of Tan Ahn-choo, on remand, residing in No. 35, Beach Road, who was charged with larceny of a watch, valued at Rs. 20, from the house of a Chinese resident. The case was adjourned to the 10th inst. for trial.

The *Bangkok Times* of the 21st ult. has an article complaining of the conduct of the Chinese cargo ships in that port, who frequently stop at night, and are not allowed to land, claiming to be British subjects. The *Times* says: "Some months ago a serious attack of this kind was made on the steamer *Borneo*, and now we learn that last week the British steamer *Weymouth* had a similar experience. The *Weymouth* was in the Narrows River, and a quarrel ensued—this time among the coolies themselves—and at a moment's notice a large number of coolies, armed with clubs and stones, actually fought on deck for fully five minutes, and the ship was driven on to the shore. The Chinese cargo ships in that port, who frequently stop at night, and are not allowed to land, claiming to be British subjects. The *Times* says: "Some months ago a serious attack of this kind was made on the steamer *Borneo*, and now we learn that last week the British steamer *Weymouth* had a similar experience. The *Weymouth* was in the Narrows River, and a quarrel ensued—this time among the coolies themselves—and at a moment's notice a large number of coolies, armed with clubs and stones, actually fought on deck for fully five minutes, and the ship was driven on to the shore."

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